

Sun Herald Op-Ed, Sunday June 7

This week, Mississippi is host to the Southern Growth Policies Board annual conference. In existence since 1971 and with 13 member states, this group's mission has been to develop policy that strengthens the South's economy and improves quality of life. This year's topic is the importance of energy policy to economic development, and there isn't a more important time than now for us all to have this discussion. The name of the conference, *Southern Energy: Abundant, Affordable, and American*, summarizes my energy policy and the policy we need to maximize economic growth.

Far too often, good American energy policy has been trumped by overreaching environmental policy. Not long after our recent experience of energy price increases and last summer's price peak, Congress and the Obama Administration have seemed to forget about the economic strain many were under then due to record high gasoline prices, especially in rural states like Mississippi where people necessarily drive more. Even though energy price spikes preceded this ugly recession and every other recession in the last 50 years, Congressional liberals and the Administration are pushing for "energy" policies that will push prices higher without provisions to produce more American energy. Aside from that, even the environmental benefits are very questionable.

In the interest of a healthy economy and national security, America needs more American energy. Economic growth requires more energy use and is slowed by high energy prices. These are facts. So shouldn't our energy policies be principled on making energy more abundant, affordable, and

American?

Those concerned about the price of energy and the price of all other things impacted by energy price, i.e. everything, should pay close attention to the debate taking place in Washington, DC, over so-called energy policy.

Several months ago, President Obama proposed a cap-and-trade tax in his budget, which fulfills the prediction he made as a candidate when he told the San Francisco Chronicle last year: "Under my plan of a cap-and-trade system, electricity bills will necessarily skyrocket." His additional proposal for \$81 billion of tax increases on the oil and gas industry will add that much more to gasoline and electricity prices, while also reducing supply, thereby driving fuel costs even higher.

Now, Congressional liberals are following suit by proposing a cap-and-trade tax in the Waxman-Markey climate change bill. This will be the biggest tax increase in history and will clobber low- and middle-income families.

A study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that the cap-and-trade tax will cost every American family more than \$3,100 per year. A McKenzie and Co. study says the cap-and-trade tax will raise electricity bills by at least 5 cents per kilowatt hour. On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, that would be a 45 percent increase and would drive the average residential electric bill from \$120 to \$174 per month.

Over and above the gigantic cost increases to families, these skyrocketing electric rates and motor-fuel prices will dramatically drive up the cost of

doing business in our country. Small businesses, America's economic engine that creates nearly 80 percent of all net new jobs, will pay far higher utility bills, and the cost of manufacturing goods in the United States will make many of our products uncompetitive and drive production and jobs overseas. To cripple our economy in the name of climate change is absolutely unacceptable. There are much better ways to address climate change than to place gigantic cost burdens on families and businesses.

Mississippians and other Americans deserve and are depending on beneficial, not costly, energy policy. The answer to our energy policy is: All of the above - more American energy. We need it all.